

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1109

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to early registration at institutions of higher education for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Brief Description: Requiring institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period to provide early registration for eligible veterans and national guard members.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Haler, Magendanz, Shea, Klippert, Smith, Green, Ormsby, Morrell, Van De Wege, Ryu, Maxwell, Zeiger, Wilcox, Jinkins, Springer, Scott, Freeman, Bergquist, Hargrove and Parker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/29/13, 2/6/13, 2/12/13 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/13/13, 98-0.

Passed Senate: 4/11/13, 48-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period for any segment of the student population to offer early registration to students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Hansen, Hargrove, Johnson, Magendanz, Pedersen, Reykdal, Riccelli, Sawyer, Scott, Sells, Smith, Tarleton and Wylie.

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Student Registration.

At public institutions of higher education, student course registration order is usually based on the number of credits a student has been awarded by the attending institution, sometimes referred to as "class standing." Priority registration varies depending on each institutional policy, and some institutions do not offer priority registration.

Veterans in Higher Education.

During the 2011 Fall academic quarter, public baccalaureate institutions in Washington served approximately 3,500 veterans, and the community and technical colleges served nearly 18,000 veterans. Institutions of higher education provide a variety of benefits for veterans and their families pursuing higher education. State law permits that within state-supported waiver authority, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for:

- an eligible veteran or National Guard member;
- the child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who was totally disabled in the line of duty, or who is listed as missing in action or a prisoner of war; or
- the surviving child or spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member killed in the line of duty; however, upon remarriage the surviving spouse no longer is eligible for a waiver.

In addition to tuition waivers, higher education institutions provide other benefits to veterans pursuing higher education. One example is the Vet Corps Navigator program funded by the federal program, AmeriCorps. The purpose of Vet Corps Navigators is to help veterans achieve their higher education goals. Vet Corps Navigators provide connections with federal, state, or local veterans benefits and financial aid programs, and help them adjust to college life.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning in the academic year 2013-14, institutions of higher education that offer an early course registration period for any segment of the student population are required to have a process in place to offer students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members early registration as follows:

- New students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members and who have completed all of their admission processes must be offered an early course registration period.
- Continuing students who are eligible veterans or National Guard members who have met current enrollment requirements must be offered early course registration among students with the same level of class standing or credit as determined by the attending institution and according to institutional policies.

In order to be eligible, a veteran or National Guard member must be a Washington domiciliary who was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces, or a National Guard member called to active duty, who served in active federal service, in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters, or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, and who, if discharged from service, has received an honorable discharge.

The provisions expire on August 1, 2022.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This proposal addresses practical obstacles unique to veterans related to GI Benefits eligibility and paperwork requirements. Our system has been managing this quite well but not perfectly. The GI bill benefits do not cover programs that are not part of a major, for this reason it is very important for veterans to get a place in courses that are part of their major. This proposal codifies current practice. Veterans support this proposal.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hansen, prime sponsor; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Gabriel Bowman, Washington Student Association; and Paul Francis, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.